

The Muslim Prisoner Bulletin

The Muslim Prisoner Ministry

In the Name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful

Editorial: "Every soul must taste death"

Recently we experienced a member of the Muslim Community coming close to being executed by the state of Missouri on February 1, 2006. Siddiq, a.k.a. Michael Taylor, was nearly executed three times over the course of three days and eventually received a stay-of-execution by the US Supreme Court. This experience got us thinking about the limits of our own mortality and our relationship with the Creator.

Allah says in the Qur'an, "every soul must taste death," and every Muslim knows that death is prepared for by and through doing righteous deeds that will tip the scale of him being granted admission into Paradise.

It's important that we evaluate our current reality to ascertain if our life goal is seeking the pleasure of Allah or are we living a life that is contrary to the commands of Allah.

Death is not the enemy of the Muslim, but dying in a state other than Islam is. We have to resist the forces that desire to have us die in a state of disbelief. We must have taqwa (fear of Allah) firmly implanted in our breast the day that Allah ends our existence. The only problem is that none of us knows when that day will be; that knowledge is with Allah alone. That means that we have to be prepared morally and spiritually, at all times, in the event that Allah comes for our souls.

In this issue we have a statement from brother Siddiq that many of us will be able to relate to and there are some other articles that were inspired by the events surrounding the near execution of our brother and the state of the death penalty in America. The brothers always ask for feedback, so we encourage you to write to these brothers.

Rashid Junaid, Editor

"Then Which of the Favors of Your Lord Will Ye Both Deny?"

By Siddiq Al Deen, aka Michael Taylor

Siddiq is a Muslim on Missouri's Death Row. He was scheduled to be executed on Feb. 1 at 12:01 am. He received several stays of execution in a case that eventually reached the U.S. Supreme Court. His case is now before a District Court Judge in Kansas City to ascertain if the method in which Missouri carries out its executions is cruel and unusual punishment. The following is the story of what he experienced leading up to what he thought would be his final hours.

As-salaamu 'alaikum Brothers.

We give all praise to Allah (swt) for his true favor upon us in being given life so as to see all that He alone has created around us! And although we cannot escape the defects and drawbacks that are inherent in every human course of endeavors, it is Allah who bestows success and guides to the straight path those who seek His mercy, inshaa' Allah. Well, I, Brother Siddiq, seek his mercy...

I want first to thank my brothers and community members for your kind words and personal messages of prayer for myself and towards my family. Thank you. Al-hamdu'lillaah.

Volume 2, Issue 1

Spring 2006 / 1427

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"Then Which of the Favors...?", Cont'd.

It was a long, hard inward journey for Siddiq. Be most assured that it is times like these that the Qur'an speaks of when it mentions our faith being *tested*, both as a man and as a Muslim. Well, in my final hours, I chose "to die not except in a state of Islam."

For almost 16 years, Brothers, I've struggled with my self just as everybody else on character and salaah. I just needed to do better in actions. The Prophet (saw) was once heard saying, "Convey my message, even if it be one single ayat."

"Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye both deny?"

In my times of waiting, I read this surah, al-Rahman, and stayed firm in my salaah. Malik and Rashid knew this to be a surah that I liked, so I was not alone as the guards watched me pray or read.

I know they were saying, "Look at this nut-bag," and I even looked one time to see the guard was shaking his head.

So at times, for them and for myself, I was a little bit louder. Surah 55 always had a catchy repeat to it; in reading it, my eyes picture what's heard and comfort is found in the message, "Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye both deny?"

And if there was ever a time that I was in need of comfort, it surely was throughout the 21 days in the actual observation cell, whereas I only had a bed, a shower, a toilet, myself, and my only answer towards strength was "Laa illaaha illa'llaah wa Muhammad ar-Rasulu'llah," my Qur'an and kufi (no joke; it made me feel more open to my confessions).

The Book teaches us: "Then who does more wrong than one who utters a lie against Allah or denies the truth (Qur'an), the Prophet, when it comes to him? Is there not in Hell an abode for those disbelievers?"

Well, Brothers, I cried on these thoughts with my family and friends. I even had to excuse a Reverend because he kept telling me that Jesus (AS) is God, but would not explain Jesus' habits (like to whom Jesus was praying, if Jesus is God).

He knew I was a Muslim and he told me *some* of what we don't believe in, so I asked him if he believed in Muhammad (saw). I asked him to read surah 21 (al-Anbiya).

He never came back, brothers, at a time when I supposedly needed his help.

My hour came. I prayed my salaah, waiting on the Angel to guide me... I received a stay.

Again my hour came. I prayed my salaah, waiting on the Angel to guide me... another stay.

Again my hour came. I prayed my salaah, waiting on the Angel to guide me... one more stay.

Brothers, Allah is the best of planners and this is a lesson for me in sharing my state of mind. Surah 55 was my comfort, along with my salaah, my intentions, and knowing that Muhammad ibn 'Abdullaah (saw) was the last of all Prophets, a Seal. "Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye both deny?"

That Angel didn't come, because it's always been with me, recording all that I do, just as yours (my brothers and sisters) records your *deeds* and *actions* towards others, your fellow brothers and sisters (humanity).

Wa 'alaikum as-salaam.

Siddiq can be reached by writing him at:

**Michael Taylor CP #89
Potosi Correctional Center
11593 State Highway O
Mineral Point MO 63660**

Please write him and let him know you support him.

Prisonersolidarity.org

Prisonersolidarity.org is a website that allows any prisoner wishing to have an article, poem, or piece of artwork published on our site to do so. Anyone wishing to be on our site should take notice of the following:

1. There's no limit on the amount of words or submissions;
2. If you wish to include a photo of yourself, send it with your submission; and
3. All prisoners should try to provide us with a small biography of themselves. This way the outside community can know something about them.

Here are two biographies from our site:

- Karon East aspires to be a friend, counselor, and motivator to people who have disadvantageously found themselves a victim of crime and the criminal justice system. She wants to be an unrelenting voice advocating on their behalf, in order to right some of the wrongs they've suffered. And now that she has evolved and knows the true meaning of life, love, and happiness, she also aspires to be the best mother and grandmother a child could have.

- Jason Gouldlock has aspirations of becoming an entrepreneur, in the interest of philanthropic advancement. He is also an aspiring athlete in the sport of basketball.

All submissions should be sent to:

Prisonersolidarity.org
P.O. Box 2184
Youngstown OH 44504

Die Not Except in a State of Islam

By Abbas Abdul-Khaliq

As-salaam alaikum

"And this was the legacy that Abraham left for his sons, and so did Jacob: 'Oh my sons! Allah hath chosen the Faith for you; then die not except in the state of submission (to Allah)'" (2:132).

Throughout the Holy Qur'an, Allah commands us by saying, "O you who believe."

We all know that a believer is one who has given up his will, has turned over his self to Allah, putting Allah's Will/Command before his own.

"When angels take the souls of those who die in sin against their souls, they say: 'In what (plight) were ye?' They reply: 'Weak and oppressed were we in the earth.' They say: 'Was not the earth of Allah spacious enough for you to move yourselves away (from evil)?' Such people will find their abode in Hell—what an evil refuge!" (4:97)

Question: If a person who has taken the Kalimah Shahadah is killed while making or trying to make a drug transaction, has that person died a believer? What about the man or woman who dies while robbing something or someone or while arguing over a gambling debt? What about the one who dies while driving a car or living in a house that was knowingly purchased with drug money, or gambling, robbery, or burglary money? Can we still die as one who submits to the will of Allah?

"O ye who believe! Fear Allah as He should be feared, and die not except in a state of Islam" (3:102).

This is hard isn't it? Allah has made it hard for the believer, those who want to be faithful. The believer has to clean his/her life up. Has to think about ways to make a living, provide for self and family, whether working a job or developing a self-employment program. A believer will face all odds to live the life commanded by Allah. The believer gives up the EASY life and is very much afraid, not of death, but to die in a state other than what is Islamic.

This is so serious that we are commanded not to even attend the funeral of one who has died in a state of disbelief.

If we die breaking the commands of Allah, or if we die helping others break His commands, we are not dying while in submission to His will. While we are breaking the commands of Allah we are not believers. When we intentionally break His commands with the thought that we can make up for it later, we are in a state far from the right. When we give money to others and they have no knowledge of how we got it, but we know it was not gained legally, we get no blessings for that gift. And if they know where it came from they get no blessings either. There are those who don't care now, but they will later. If Allah means for us to have good wealth, then we will have it. If He intends for us to struggle hard for a living, then that is what must be done. The ground you're buried in, pay for it legally. The wealth you leave to your family, let it be good wealth.

"Nor do thou ever pray for any of them that dies, nor stand at their grave; for they rejected Allah and His Messenger, and died in a state of perverse rebellion" (9:84).

This is not only speaking of those who refuse to fight in the cause of Allah, it is also speaking to those who refuse to obey the commands of Allah and His Messenger (saw). This is speaking about those we know who claim to be believers, this is speaking about us.

If you have to start out working for someone else but can't find a job, work for temp agencies. Not just one agency, put in applications at those you can get to. When you are sent on a job, be a serious, good worker. Don't be like those who just try to get by. The goal is to be picked up by a company who will pay in the starting range you need. If you know how to paint, put aside part of your money to buy supplies and while doing that canvas the area for painting jobs. You're working toward being self-employed. Get with a friend who knows how to tape, caulk, and can stay on a ladder. It's not hard to work for self and family. You have to want the right way of life. If you disagree with my simple example, come up with your own.

DIE NOT EXCEPT IN A STATE OF ISLAM.

If we die breaking the commands of Allah, or if we die helping others break His commands, we are not dying while in submission to His will. While we are breaking the commands of Allah we are not believers. When we intentionally break His commands with the thought that we can make up for it later, we are in a state far from the right.

A Walk Through the Hellfire

By Mahir Jawid

To read this is to take a trip through the Hellfire for this fictitious person, who could be me, you, or someone you know.

While on earth you're going through a trial for Allah. Your way of life defines the punishment or acceptance into Paradise. Now the guy in this story, let's call him Mike, could be a Muslim who believed then disbelieved on several occasions throughout his life, back and forth until death, or became a hypocrite, or even killed a Muslim. Mike even could have associated partners with Allah. Mike could have neglected to pray or given charity to purify his own soul and possessions. More or less, he lived his life opposite of what Allah asks of us.

Upon death, his trial of life is over and punishment begins. Immediately his soul is ripped out of his body (79:1). Awaiting Judgment Day, his face is turned black for the sins he has against him (39:60). Not being able to place blame on anyone (36:63-65), he is placed in yokes and chains along with the many other people to be escorted to the Hellfire (40:71-72). Mike is scared and curious about the people and Jinn around him (7:38-39) and sure he shouldn't be a part of the march to the Hellfire. He asks Malik to lessen his suffering (43:77). The angel ignores his question with a loud thundering "Get moving!"

Along the way, people start speaking about themselves and what lead them to this destination (74:42-48, 14:28-30). He is dragged along and is very thirsty as the heat gets intense. From the distance along the route to the Hellfire, he sees columns of smoke and sparks of fire (77:30-31). Looking back at the entourage of men and Jinn, he sees some being dragged on their faces (40:71-72).

Finally, they make it to the gates of the Hellfire in its catastrophic awe. The sight is unbearable, not to mention the heat. For some of the people that were brought to the Hellfire with Mike, this is their stop, but not for Mike. Thinking aloud, Mike asks himself, "where am I going?" A man in the Hellfire walks up to him and gives him a little insight. Mike is shocked at the sight of the guy because his

body looks like he has been roasted through (4:56). As he talks to Mike, his lips are falling off (23:104). "Mike," he says. "You're going to another level of Hellfire. Some people here at this level of Hellfire will be able to leave at some point. But for people that touch the deepest part of the Hellfire..." Smack! An iron mace hits the guy in his back (22:19-22). On the ground, his face is splashed in a puddle of rank, boiling water. The chains and yokes are yanked once more as the angel hustles the entourage to the next level of the Hellfire. Mike was afraid from the time he arrived because of the images before his eyes, but when the man told him that this was the best part of Hellfire, he didn't know what to expect next. And what about those levels he was talking about?

He walks past people lapping like camels at the water provided to quench their thirst, but unable to do so. Other people eat from some trees, which look plentiful in number, but very nasty to eat from. To the left of him is a man cutting flesh off of his own body and eating it. Drove of people are looking for nourishment, without ever receiving it (56:42-55).

Mike is shocked at what he is witnessing. There are some people eating foul, putrid meat because they fornicated. Some are getting their lips cut with iron scissors because they rose to speak and address people during times of civil strife. Some have their mouths gaping open while they devour hot coals which come out of their anuses, for having consumed the property of orphans (*The Soul's Journey after Death* 23).

Mike understands very well what the levels the man was talking about when he first arrived in the Hellfire are. They are devoted to special classifications of sinners (15:44). There are some having brass nails scratch their faces and chests. These were backbiters. He walked past one man sitting and another man standing holding an iron hook which he struck into the side of the sitting man's mouth so that it came out at the back of the neck. Then he did the same to the other side. After his mouth had healed itself and returned to normal, he did the same thing again (14: 16-17. *The Soul's Journey after Death* 24).

Mike walks past a man lying on his back. Another man stands at his head with a stone and smashes it. When he hits the head, the stone rolls away and he goes to retrieve it. When he gets back to the man, his head is mended and returned to normal and he smashes it again. Mike finds out that the man had learned the Qur'an, but had spent his nights asleep and did not act according to it in the daytime (20:74. *The Soul's Journey after Death* 24).

The angel stops in front of a hole like a furnace which is narrow at the top and wide at the bottom. This is the stop for some of the people that accompany him. There is a fire burning under the furnace and there are naked men and women in it. The flames leap up to them from underneath. When the fire comes near, they rise up until they almost come out; when it abates, they go back into it again. The people that are thrown in scream. One woman is dragged on her face until she is at the edge, then she is hit with a mace and knocked in (54:48. *The Soul's Journey after Death* 24-25). A man yelled out of the furnace, "I'm sorry for all the fornicating I was doing. Please just kill me and stop the pain." The angel just walked away (20:74).

Boiling water is thrown on Mike's face and the angel tells Mike and the few others left with him to keep moving (22:19-22). His body burned and skin falling off, apprehensive about the final destination, now that they are in the 7th layer of Hellfire, Mike asks the angel, "What will be the end of me?" The angel stops, turns, and looks at him and says, "Who does more wrong than one who turns away after the Signs of the Lord are recited to him?" The angel extends his left wing and arm as a welcome to Mike's eternity. Mike's eyes widen and he starts to tremble; then he passes out.

Although this story is fictitious, the ayats that are quoted in the story are not. Allah has revealed much insight into the Hellfire. No one can think he is safe from the Hellfire. Each person should evaluate every act that he does to avoid ending up like Mike, or any people suffering in the Hellfire. Oh, one more thing, there is always more room there (50:30).

Role Models: Inspirations to Excellence

By T. Sharif, The Jazz Broker©

"There will come to you a guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve" (2:38).

The legendary jazz singer Luqman Hamza told me a very humorous and insightful story once about why he chose to become a musician and singer. It was a tale of inspiration that most of us can relate to. He recounted how as a young boy he attended a concert of one of the most popular vocal groups of his era, the Inkspots. Like most of the youngsters, he sat enthralled by the performance. Then at one point the lead singer, decked out in the "finest threads" and a huge diamond ring on his pinky finger, hit a note in the song, flashed his ring and his killer smile; the girls went crazy! They screamed, tore their clothes, and even fainted. At that moment little Larry (Luqman) knew *exactly* what he wanted to be: a singer.

Fortunately for him (and for us) he soon made the decision to become a Muslim under the teachings of the Hon. Elijah Muhammad. This decision impacted his inspiration and dedication to perfect his character, as well as his craft as a jazz musician. Luqman would go on to become a credit to his role models and to his community. How many of us can say the same?

A role model is by definition, "a person whose behavior in a particular role is imitated by others." Most of us as Muslims are familiar with the Qur'anic verse regarding Prophet Muhammad (saw): "Certainly you have an excellent model in the Messenger of Allah for one who hopes for Allah and the Last Day and who remembers Allah again and again" (33:21). But how many of us see Prophet Muhammad (saw) as truly the role model for us in every aspect of our lives? How many of us claim to follow a living landmark of Qur'anic science and behavior such as Imam W. Deen Mohammed, but fail to implement his profound insights in our lives?

Who really are our role models? Are they crunked-up, cracked-out rappers with \$50,000 worth of gold/silver teeth, spouting filth, surrounded by gyrating, half-naked women? Are they low-life, murderous, vicious, self-centered, so-called "gangstas"? Are they super wealthy sports figures, movie stars, television personalities, or businesspeople who worship the idol of materialism?

Every year we celebrate the life and achievements of the great leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who had a dream that one day all human beings would be judged "by the content of their character." Who as a role model really inspires and informs our character?

Many of our greatest Islamic scholars, past and present, have identified as a major contributing factor to the current impotence of the world community of al-Islam Muslims' slavish imitation of Western culture as a model for our social, economic, governmental, and moral behavior. The late Dr. M. Amir Ali made a very astute observation in his tract, "The Five Pillars (or Ruins?) of Islam." He wrote, "The messengership of Prophet Muhammad (saw) means accepting him as a guide and a ROLE MODEL in daily life. Unfortunately, the role model of a large majority of Muslims is the white man of the west. From the rulers of

Muslim countries to ordinary people in the street, whether living in a Muslim country or western country, the role model is a white 'successful' person, certainly NOT Prophet Muhammad (saw)." This is a Truth that speaks to the very core of the historical conflict between two cultures and the subsequent psychological condition of the "losers" of that struggle to date.

Muslims throughout the world find themselves facing an enormous disparity between what Allah has promised us as "the best community that has ever been brought forth for (the good of) mankind" (3:10) and our present "reality" of being labeled by the West as insane "radical fundamentalists," hunted as "terrorists," and identified with all sorts of social outcasts. And this from a culture that has become morally bankrupt, spiritually adrift, and psychologically demented with each passing day. Why? Because it, as well as its so-called Muslim followers fuel the downward spiral with blood sacrifice of their lives and the lives of their children when they pay homage to the chief idol of the West: A HIGHER STANDARD OF LIVING! History tells us repeatedly that when a people who were blessed by Almighty G-d with prophets, the People of the Book (Christians, Jews, Muslims), strayed from the ultimate standard of life, pleasing G-d, their decline and demise was not far behind.

A great modern day scholar, Muhammad Asad, observed in his thought-provoking book, *Islam at the Crossroads*: "It is futile to argue, as many of the Muslim 'intelligentsia' do, that it is of no spiritual consequence whatsoever whether we live in this way or that, whether we put on

How many of us see Prophet Muhammad (saw) as truly the role model for us in every aspect of our lives? How many of us claim to follow a living landmark of Qur'anic science and behavior, but fail to implement his profound insight in our lives?

Western dress or that of our forebears, whether we are conservative in our customs or not. Such reasoning is extremely misleading...only very superficial people can believe that it is possible to imitate a civilization in its external appearance without being at the same time affected by its spirit." Noble Drew Ali, Marcus Garvey, and the Hon. Elijah Muhammad all said in essence that we, Muslims in particular and people of African descent in general, must identify Self, with Self, and do for Self!

Finally, Imam W. Deen Mohammad has warned us that a primary focus of the "Schemes of Satan" is to gradually deceive us away from our true human (Muslim) nature. As we blindly wander after every new mad fad or so-called "modern" idea or ideal, we see our youngest, best, and brightest plunge off cliffs of shirk into the abyss of materialism like frightened cows. Who are your role models? Where are they leading you? What is the content of your character?

Death Penalty (Facts and Islamic Views)

By 'Abd Malik

"Do not take the life which God has made sacred except in (the course) of justice" (6:151). This verse highlights the primary cause of contention with respect to the death penalty, namely the idea of justice. A disparity lies in regards to the goal of the judicial system's implementation of capital punishment and the reality of a society plagued by racism which serves to distort the American justice system.

The controversy over the death penalty has spread worldwide since its consequences are irreversible.

Advocates argue that capital punishment protects society by deterring people from committing murder and opponents argue that the sanctity of human life should prevent the implementation of state-sanctioned murder.

European countries have abolished the death penalty and several other countries have followed the trend. However, in the United States there proves to be widespread inconsistency between abolitionist and retentionist states about the legitimacy of the death penalty.

The United States is one of the 79 countries that retain the death penalty, but the debate over the legitimacy of capital punishment has infiltrated the nation, leading to an inconsistent implementation among the states. As of the year 2000, thirteen states—Alaska, Hawaii, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, Rhode Island, Vermont, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and the District of Columbia—do not have the death penalty. Why is this inconsistency an issue?

A just system entails that the same punishment be administered for the same crime. But in the United States, a killer in Michigan could potentially commit the same crime as someone in Texas and serve a lighter sentence.

Aside from its inconsistent implementation in the United States, the death penalty is plagued with other unacceptable injustices. Racism is an unfortunate reality of American society that has permeated the judicial system.

Nearly 90 percent of people executed for murder were convicted of killing whites, though people of "color" make up half of all homicide

victims nationally. Also, in Illinois, Oklahoma, and North Carolina, killers of white victims are four times more likely to receive the death penalty than the killers of black victims. In Mississippi they are five times more likely and in Maryland they are seven times more likely to receive the death penalty. These frightening statistics compel one to question why America has regressed with respect to the idea of race and the value of human life.

The death penalty in American is not only controversial because of its inconsistency, but also because of its cost. According to Amnesty International, 900 executions have been carried out in America from 1979 to March 2005 and 3500 prisoners were under the death penalty as of January 2005. Taxpayers are funding this extremely expensive government program. The latest detailed study of the Bureau of Justice Statistics found that the death penalty cost North Carolina \$2.16 million *per execution*, which is more than the cost of non-death penalty cases with a sentence of life imprisonment.

Another interesting example of retentionist state economical distress is Californian, which spends \$90 million *annually* on the death penalty beyond the normal cost of the justice system. Perhaps, though, the tax payers will bear this economic burden if implementation of the death penalty decreases the crime rate. Unfortunately, there is strong evidence that the death penalty does not discourage crime at all.

The ten states having the most murders—from 8 to 14 per 100,000 people—are all states that enforce the death penalty. However, the greatest attack on the notion of a just implementation of the death penalty in America comes from the risk of killing the innocent.

According to Amnesty International, since 1973, 115 prisoners have been released from Death Row in the United States after evidence emerged proving them innocent of the crimes for which they were sentenced to death. The sanctity of human life require that every precaution be taken to obliterate any doubt concerning guilt. The principle causes of sentencing people to execution are police misconduct, unreliable evidence, and inadequate defense

representation. Such cases highlight the bleak reality of the American judicial system that ensures due process of law and defense for the rich, and quick, inaccurate review of cases for the poor.

Whether one takes an abolitionist or retentionist stance, American Muslims must be aware of the reality of the death penalty in the US.

Ironically, it is always discussed as a matter of legislature or human rights when, for Muslims, the ruling of the death penalty is an issue of faith.

One discusses capital punishment from the giver of life and death as stated in the Holy Qur'an: "He who creates life and death, that he may test which of you is best in deed. He is the Mighty and the Forgiving" (67:2).

Contrary to popular belief, the Muslim penal system is characterized by a strong undercurrent of clemency, mercy, and sympathy for the oppressed.

The Islamic laws are based on justice, as one of the attributes of God is "Al-Adil" (The Just). Contrary to popular belief, the Muslim penal system is characterized by a strong undercurrent of clemency, mercy, and sympathy for the oppressed.

In Surat al-Baqarah, verse 178-79, the Qur'anic ruling on the institution of the death penalty is addressed: "O ye who believe! The law of equality is prescribed for you in cases of murder: The free for the free, the slave for the slave. But if any remission is made by the brother of the slain then grant him with good gratitude: this is a concession of mercy from your Lord. After this whoever exceeds the limit shall be in grave penalty. In the laws of equality there is life for you, O men of understanding!"

As evidenced from the verse, the ruling of the death penalty in Islam is devoid of vengeance or hatred. Quite the contrary, Islam encourages

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Some Thoughts on Punishment By Daniel Bahauddin

In the Qur'an, Allah (swt) clearly prescribes corporal punishment for certain social crimes and outlines the principle of retribution (qisas). In the West, however, these punishments are generally looked down upon as barbaric and cruel.

But are they really cruel, especially when compared to the prevailing practice of imprisonment? Is not depriving a person of his freedom, his most essential right, more barbaric and cruel? Locking someone away and preventing him from living with his family and working and making choices to support them is certainly no less cruel than subjecting him

to corporal punishment, especially considering the serious psychological and physical harms that can result from imprisonment. I, personally, would prefer ten lashes over ten years away from my family.

Imprisonment takes away much of the possibility for reform. Reform takes place by living in society and with the family, not in an oppressive environment filled with other criminals.

Is a highly regulated system of corporal punishment really more cruel than one that imprisons more than 2 million people without recourse for reform?

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Death Penalty, cont'd.

repentance and forgiveness with the ultimate goal of rehabilitation of the individual.

Homicide is punished in Islam by either retaliation (qisas) or blood money (diya).

Yet the question remains: Who is to enforce qisas or the acceptance of diya? A court comprised of judges who are experts in the Islamic laws (shari'ah) is the best authority.

The death penalty is justified under Islamic law for three crimes. First, proven and unjust murder. Second, adultery (zina) committed by a married person either confessed four times or witnessed by four people. The punishment is harsh because of the sanctity of the Muslim family is highly revered and protected in Islam. Third, the crime of apostasy, specifically the unbelief of a Muslim who has publicly confessed faith in Islam willingly, is punished by death. In Islam, the stability of the community (ummah) is of the utmost importance. In regards to apostasy, "a Muslim's rejection of faith after his acceptance is declaring an open revolt against Islam" (*Islam and Revolution* by Imam Al-Kulayni).

Threatening the solidarity of the Muslim community is a revolt against the guidance of Allah (swt) and against the community and is equal to treason; the guilty one is justly sentenced to death.

How is the death penalty in Islam different from the implementation in America?

In Islam there is a spirit of forgiveness and mercy that surrounds the ruling of the death penalty. Also, one should not view the ruling as harsh, since in Islam there is no sentencing based on circumstantial evidence on the testimony of a single witness. Rather, as seen by the almost impossible to fulfill stipulations regarding conviction for zina, the death penalty is only implemented in cases where there is absolute certainty. In all other cases, the person accused is granted the benefit of the doubt. In fact, in the case of zina, the accuser is the one punished if he or she cannot produce four witnesses (24:4). As seen here, the death penalty in Islam is not implemented selectively or based on prejudice.

With all theoretical cost and benefits of the death penalty taken into account, the reality of the pain of suffering the murder of a loved one cannot be felt except by those nearest to the casualty. For that reason, after an Islamic court has ruled without any doubt, *Islam has given the decision of the death penalty to the heir of the victim*, who is given the option to pardon the convicted. Islam provides a balance between forgiveness and recompense with the overarching themes of mercy and justice.

Any just law must contain a method of pro-

tecting society from killers who do not display any signs of reform.

As Muslims in America, it is of the utmost importance that we realize that the American judicial system is flawed and that we must develop an opinion on the death penalty based on the reality of our society and the justice of Allah (swt), Most High. It is Allah (swt) who gives life and it is he who takes away. The sanctity of human life is one of the fundamental issues of faith in Islam, and when Muslims assess the death penalty they should reference the verse that states: "We decreed for the children of Israel that whoever kills another human being for other than manslaughter or corruption on earth, it should be as if he killed all mankind, and whoever saves a life, it would be as though he saved all mankind."

Being that the death penalty is not governed by Islamic law, The Muslim Prisoner Ministry opposes the death penalty in America and seeks to abolish such. It is unjust and biased when used. It is clearly arbitrary and capricious. How much money one has or the color of his skin should not be a factor in what should be a moral, ethical, fair, and impartial justice system. Write the MPM to find out more how you can effectively make a stand to abolish the death penalty.

The Muslim Prisoner Ministry
3936 South Benton
Kansas City MO 64130

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Make checks payable to the Muslim Prisoner Ministry.

Inscribed on the hilt of the Prophet Muhammad's (SAW) sword:

"Forgive him who wrongs you; join him who cuts you off; do good to him who does evil to you; and speak the truth although it be against yourself."



Our Rights: Prayer Oils By Rashid Junaid

The use of oils during times of prayer can be traced back to the Prophet Muhammad (saw). Some scholars have even stated that verses in the Qur'an suggest the use of prayer oils. When you visit any masjid throughout the world you will find the Believers there using prayer oils.

The ingredients of prayer oils must be Islamically acceptable, i.e. non-alcoholic, non-pork-derived, etc. It is best to use a Muslim vendor to purchase prayer oils to ensure that they are halal. There are a lot of vendors that market "oil" and "prayer oils" that have ingredients in them that we can't use.

In penal institutions throughout the US corrections officials have accommodated the Muslims' need for prayer oils, but in some states they have banned prayer oils or only allow Muslims to purchase oil that is made by a non-

Muslim manufacturer, which is equivalent to a ban.

We received a letter from a brother in Arizona who stated that the Muslim community there was only allowed to purchase oil from a Wiccan vendor for an exorbitant price. The community, after much struggle, later got approved to purchase from a Muslim vendor. Praise be to Allah!

Muslims, despite their unfortunate incarceration, still have the right to practice the tenets of their religion. These rights are protected by the US constitution. The Supreme Court has held that, "a prison inmate retains those First Amendment Rights that are not inconsistent with his status as a prisoner or with the legitimate penological objectives of the correctional system" (Pell v. Procunier). Successful challenges to total bans on prayer oils are virtually

impossible to lose as long as your complaint is worded correctly.

In Michigan a total ban on prayer oil was deemed unconstitutional and opened the door for the Muslims in Michigan to receive prayer oils. The court stated in this case, "the use of prayer oils in the Muslim religion is entitled to constitutional protection under the free exercise clause" (Munir v. Scott). This case can be used to support other complaints against a total ban on prayer oils elsewhere.

Please keep in mind that in our effort to establish the rights of Muslim Prisoners we must be respectful and polite, yet firm and unwavering.

Note: See Munir v. Scott 192 F. Supp. 1492 (E.D. Michigan 1992) and Pell v. Procunier, 417 US 817, 822, 94 Sct. 2800, 2804, 41 L. Ed. 2d 495 (1974)